



**NEWCASTLE
CATHEDRAL**

NEWCASTLE CATHEDRAL

**INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES
BASS LAY CLERK VACANCY**

BACKGROUND

The Cathedral Church of St. Nicholas is one of the most beautiful and historic buildings in Newcastle upon Tyne. The spire has dominated Newcastle's skyline and served as a navigation point for ships in the River Tyne for more than 500 years. The musical profile of Newcastle Parish Church increased when Charles Avison, one of the most influential English composers of the concerto in the 18th century, was appointed as organist in 1736. Since the church gained Cathedral status in 1882, there has been an almost daily tradition of choral services. This pattern continues to the present day with usually seven choral services per week, at least five of which involve the Lay Clerks.

There was a Cathedral Choir school for the education of choristers until 1976. Since its closure, the Boy Choristers have been recruited from schools across Newcastle, Gateshead and the surrounding areas. In 2008, an additional Cathedral Girls Choir was formed. The independent choirs of boy and girl choristers now alternate in the singing of Cathedral services, with the two groups joining for Christmas and Easter Morning Eucharists and a small number of other special occasions. The Lay Clerks sing the alto, tenor and bass parts, acting as the 'back row' for either choir of choristers. There is also a weekly Evensong at which the Lay Clerks sing alone.

In addition to the regular routine, past engagements have included MacMillan's *St Luke Passion* with the Northern Sinfonia at Sage Gateshead, a Christmas performance with the New Tyneside Orchestra, and we are planning a performance of Handel's *Messiah* with St Nicholas Baroque. A significant number of CD recordings have been made, and Choral Evensong broadcast on BBC Radio 3. We hope to record a new CD in early 2020. The Choir has toured internationally, recent tours have included Norway, Sweden, Malta France, and Belgium in 2018.

The Canon for Music and Liturgy is Clare MacLaren. The Organist and Director of Music is Ian Roberts, and the Assistant Director of Music is Kris Thomsett.

Newcastle Cathedral employs six Lay Clerks, translating to one of each voice part on either side of the choir. Singers need the experience, vocal technique and stamina to work as a sole contributor to the voice part. Beauty of sound and impeccable tuning is essential. As well as the Lay Clerks, we

currently offer, through the generous support of the Ouseley Church Music Trust, some Choral Scholarships to university students.

The city holds opportunities for additional employment in a variety of roles. This includes music tuition (practical and theory) and part-time teaching. As the regional centre for the North-East of England, Newcastle upon Tyne is artistically vibrant. The Cathedral Music Department enjoys strong links with the University of Newcastle, Northumbria University and Sage Gateshead. The Director of Music is developing ever stronger links with primary and secondary schools in the state and private sectors.

The Cathedral Music Department will endeavour to give successful candidates every support in securing additional employment should this be appropriate. The choir schedule allows for further singing opportunities, in particular on Saturdays, during the daytime, and during choir holidays.

Depending on circumstances, Lay Clerks may also wish to consider singing with the Cathedral Northumbria Choir. This is a new joint venture between Newcastle Cathedral and Northumbria University, offering students, sixth formers, and former boy choristers who are still of school age the opportunity to sing Evensong on a weekly basis. Some Lay Clerks may wish to support the young people in this endeavour, and develop their own professional links with Northumbria University's new Music Degree programme as it forms and develops in subsequent years. This would be entirely optional, and there is no contractual obligation for Lay Clerks in this respect.

The Lay Clerks play a fundamental role in the Cathedral's mission and ministry, as such they are a valued part of the small team of employees at Newcastle Cathedral.

JOB SPECIFICATION

Role Title: Bass Lay Clerk

Accountable to: Organist and Director of Music

Hours of commitment (subject to occasional change) during Cathedral Choir term time:

Wednesday 4.45pm – 5.20pm Rehearsal
5.30pm – 6.15pm Evensong

Thursday 4.45pm – 5.20pm Rehearsal
5.30pm – 6.15pm Evensong
6.20pm – 7.30pm Rehearsal

Friday 4.45pm – 5.20pm Rehearsal
5.30pm – 6.15pm Evensong

Sunday 9.00am Rehearsal
10.00am Eucharist (usually finishes c.11.15am)
2.45pm – 3.45pm Rehearsal
4.00pm Evensong (usually finishes c. 5.00pm)

*[Tuesday 4.45pm – 5.20pm Optional rehearsal with Cathedral Northumbria Choir
5.30pm – 6.15pm Optional Evensong with Cathedral Northumbria Choir]*

Additional contractual duties in the choir year include major festivals and observances such as Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, Ash Wednesday, Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of Holy Week, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Day, Ascension Day, Corpus Christi, All Souls', the Patronal Festival Eucharist at Newcastle Cathedral (St Nicholas), the Patronal Festival at Durham Cathedral (St Cuthbert), 2 Ordination Services, 3 Cathedral Concerts (evening, with afternoon rehearsal), Old Choristers' Reunion Evensong (Saturday) and a service, concert, or other event for the Hadrian Choirs Festival. The Lay Clerks' participation in other Choirs' Association Events, choir tours, recordings and broadcasts will be agreed in consultation with the Lay Clerks on a 'case by case' basis.

Remuneration and benefits: Salary of £6,120 (reviewed annually)

Fees for singing at weddings, funerals, and commercial events not listed above (levels also reviewed annually)

Eligibility to join the Cathedral's Pension Scheme upon request

Choir Holiday for approximately 13 weeks of the year

PERSON SPECIFICATION

Essential:

- An adult singer (usually university graduate) with experience of singing in a choral ensemble of professional standard
- Sympathetic to the ethos and purposes of Newcastle Cathedral
- A well-trained voice, with beauty of sound, impeccable tuning, good range, and flexibility
- Ability to provide a strong line as the sole singer on either side of the choir
- Good sight-reading skills
- Willingness to work as part of a small and close-knit team, and the ability to respond quickly and positively to direction
- Experience of solo singing, and confidence as a verse singer
- An understanding of the professional nature of the job, and the drive to undertake adequate personal preparation
- A thirst for continual personal and professional development
- Adherence to current best safeguarding practice, including the Cathedral's Safeguarding policy, and training as required
- Good sense of humour and patience

Desirable:

- Willingness to engage with the wider Cathedral community
- Good working knowledge of the Anglican Choral repertoire
- Interest in a wide variety of music

RECRUITMENT PROCESS

To apply, please send a **letter of application** outlining the qualities that you could bring to the post of Lay Clerk at Newcastle Cathedral, the details of two referees and a copy of your CV to:

Ian Roberts
Director of Music
Newcastle Cathedral
Cathedral House
42-44 Mosley Street
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 1DF

Or you can e-mail the application as attachments to: music@stnicholascathedral.co.uk.

Ian is always pleased to have an informal conversation about the post.

Please contact him on 0191 232 1939 (ext. 204) or at the e-mail address above.

Any offer of appointment will be dependent on the receipt of satisfactory references, and the position is subject to DBS checks.